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AUTHOR Sweeney, John M.
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ABSTRACT

At a time when few copywriting jobs are available for new graduates, enrollments in advertising are exploding. An advertising educator set out to change students' perceptions that in advertising only copywriting requires imagination by developing a course called "Advertising and Innovation" which was designed to force students to use their imaginative abilities across a wide range of assignments. Students in the course completed two "innovation projects," one "trendline report," one "new business campaign," and a final exam. The course has generated student enthusiasm and fulfills the stated goal of broadening the use of student creativity. The course also points to a potential merging of advertising with change and innovation in society, giving advertising education a more significant educational mission. (RS)

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"ADVERTISING AND INNOVATION"

A new course and direction for advertising education.

A paper by:

John Sweeney
Associate Professor
School of Journalism
University of North Carolina
Howell Hall CB 3365
Chapel Hill,
North Carolina 27599-3365

CS507244

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"ADVERTISING AND INNOVATION"

A new course and direction in advertising education.

Success can sometimes breed a measure of discontent. My university has had strong success in developing and placing copywriting talent in agencies across America. However, our success in placement left this instructor with a concern for instructional focus and, more distressing, a concern for student focus.

Placement of talent at major agencies fresh out of school will be a rare event even for the most successful programs. A top agency like Leo Burnett or Young & Rubicam will only offer a handful of junior writer positions and will be able to choose from hundreds of applicants. Even celebrated advertising programs will only deliver advertising jobs to a tiny elite at a time when enrollments are exploding.

More disturbing, many students look upon the position of agency copywriter as the only successful outlet for their creativity. And continue to hold to the ludicrous idea that writing is creative but other positions in business require no imagination. This narrow orientation to the copywriting course is not only foolishly rigid given the few agency jobs available, it violates the larger spirit of college learning where narrow vocationalism should be secondary to rigorous educational pursuit.

My attempt to solve the problems of rare creative jobs and narrow orientation from students finally ended in the development of a new course. It was given the offbeat title of "Advertising and Innovation" and was created to force students to use their imaginative abilities across a wide range of assignments. The results are positive and may contain the beginnings of an important direction for advertising education.

The goals for the course were presented in the syllabus:

1. The course will encourage student creativity across a broad range of projects.
2. The course will examine future societal trends and examine the role of advertising in these trends.
3. The course will analyze the role of advertising in new product development and new business development.
4. The course will examine the larger issues of change and innovation in society.

The first assignments for the course were consistent with the first stated goal. Each student was randomly assigned two innovation projects. These were to be presented in front of the class on a stated presentation date. The projects covered five areas:

#1 Develop a new sport, game or art form.

#2 Solve the problem of urban traffic congestion, the homeless or public education in a new way. You may <u>not</u> invent a new technology.

#3 Develop a new product based on the graying of America or the emerging preoccupation with health/fitness or improved diet.

#4 Develop a new kind of tourist business or location.

#5 Develop a futuristic look at the media of the future, schooling of the future or housing of the future. Present a specific design.

While the results ranged from mediocre to excellent, many of the ideas showed genuine creativity. A few examples:

- An outdoor game named baubles that is a combination of soccer and billiards.
- Troubled teens and single elderly live together in a government sponsored home. Each can help the other.
- A series of jogging tapes. Each is designed with a beat that coincides with the appropriate pace for the jogger. Available in jazz, pop or symphonic.
- A service called "Home Free" where a family stays at home for vacation. The service cuts the lawn, babysits, cleans, cooks and runs errands. It is truly a vacation at home.
- A travel package called "DeTour Tours" for the offbeat tourist. A string of obscure but interesting stops are organized for the adventurous.
- Condo trees are a futuristic design where a large highrise is composed of movable apartments. An owner can move to a new condo tree in a distant city and take his apartment along.

Students were given a form for the evaluation of each innovation project. They were asked to assign a number based on the following criteria:

1. Original, novel, unexpected, boldly surprising 40 points
2. Feasible, seemingly practical, possible, clear 20 points
3. Tightly presented, excellent graphics, well-written well-explained 20 points

TOTAL: 80 points

The instructor used these anonymous evaluations to help grade assignments. Since students were choosing numbers with no relation to a grade scale, the numbers were useful to rank assignments. It is instructive to note that there was nearly 200 points difference between the highest and lowest rated assignment on one project.

The text for the course was New Product Development by George Gruenwald, former Chairman of Campbell-Mithun Advertising in Chicago and Minneapolis. Lectures were integrated with the book and followed its process approach to the creation of new products. Gruenwald breaks product development into eight phases:

1. Need
2. Commitment
3. Exploration
4. Conception
5. Modeling
6. Marketing
7. Market Testing
8. Major Introduction

Each phase is given a detailed analysis in the text which supports its insights with good case studies. One of the important changes in the role of advertising concerns the use of advertising thinking at earlier stages of product development. The upcoming Saturn car from General Motors is an illustration. The agency, Hal Riney & Partners, was brought in to help with the development of the car years before introduction. This is in marked contrast to the traditional approach of showing the agency an advanced prototype or finished model and then asking the agency to find a way to sell it.

A second content area for the course was trend analysis. The book Mastering Change by Leon Martel was used as a text. Martel breaks change into structural and cyclical changes. He identifies structural change as irreversible and requiring permanent adjustment. He identifies cyclical change as recurring and requiring only temporary adjustment. Martel sees nine structural changes occurring in America.

1. Information

The information society will revolutionize goods and services.

2. Education

Traditional literacy is being replaced by a new literacy. The timing and content of education is changing.

3. Communications
Electronic communication growing, print slowing.
Interactive media will be the next breakthrough.

4. Industrialization
Developing countries moving to industrial state.

5. PostIndustrialization
Movement toward service economy means getting rich more slowly.

6. Population
Rates of growth are slowing and life expectancies are lengthening. Changes are occurring in the shape of family and relationships.

7. Work
The composition of the workforce is changing.
The nature and location of work is changing.

8. Attitudes
New issues such as health and safety are rising in social priority.

9. Income
Wages growing more slowly and the composition of income is changing in terms of non-wage benefits.

Martel also sees four cyclical patterns occurring in society:

1. The business cycle

Bull and bear, recession and recovery.

2. Demand Cycle
Renewable resources either in or out of demand.
Professions have either too many or too few applicants.

3. Organizational Behavior
Businesses are centralizing or decentralizing.
Society is moving to be more liberal or more conservative.

4. Social Behavior
Fads and fashions are real forces that rise and fall.

The course looks on the content presented from the two texts with a perspective based on the two working together:

1. Students look for opportunity in future cycles, structural changes and trends.

2. Students learn the correct process for developing products and services for these areas of opportunity.

NEW BUSINESS CAMPAIGN (continued)

I. Final report bound and handed in on time. Size no larger than a term paper.

5. All campaigns and products will receive a separate grade component dedicated solely to originality and innovation.

Tame, imitative products and campaigns will suffer under this grading system.

Examples of these campaigns are not yet available but will be available for the August meeting.

Grading for the course was split up among assignments:

2 innovation projects	33%
1 trendline report	17%
1 New Business Campaign	25%
Final Exam	25%

The course has been met with student enthusiasm and fulfills the stated goal of broadening the use of student creativity. More than that, it points to a potential merging of advertising with a separate field that gives advertising education a more significant mission.

Advertising is the voice of business and the voice of product change in our society. It can be argued that advertising is the appropriate place to look at the issues of change and innovation in society. No current department looks at this important knowledge area in academia. This could be an area of study without specific vocational ties yet great importance to society. It could give advertising a larger purpose than the training of copywriters or the researching of narrow advertising issues.

I believe that advertising education can benefit from a merging with innovation, trends, new product development and the study of change. Whether as a 3.0 credit hour course or an entire curricular approach, the results will be beneficial.